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EDITORIAL NOTES

I have previously pointed out the necessity of allowing the secondary school to pass under a control from within. Just why this is so imperative may be made clear by an analysis of the conditions under which the work of the secondary school is now being conducted. Without being carried away by the attractiveness of the metaphor, we may gain in directness of statement by saying that the secondary school is being ground between the upper and nether millstone. The elementary school is an unyielding basis beneath it and the college a weighty but shifting mass above it. Dropping the metaphor, then, let us look at the facts.

THE UPPER
AND NETHER
MILLSTONE

It is now in round numbers a century and a half since the opening of the struggle for an elementary school that should have its own justification for existence. After this long lapse of time in spite of renewed criticism we may fairly say that the elementary school has found itself and is living a life of independence and of real development. There were two fundamental things to be got by the struggle begun by Rousseau and Pestalozzi and continued to our day. These two things were not really separate and distinct but different aspects of a life-process designed for children. They were, first, a *content* that should have meaning for the children in their reaching out after experience, and, second, a *method* that should be in keeping with and contributory to their growth. The struggle has ended in a permanent victory on these two fundamental points. No one desires now that the elementary school curriculum shall be determined from the standpoint of the secondary school, nor that the method of elementary education shall be contingent on such a curriculum determined from without. The secondary school not only must, but is quite willing to leave these matters to the elementary school specialist. Such criticism as is heard is directed against failure to live up to opportunities granted, or against misapplication of principles.

Furthermore, in the course of this century-and-a-half development it has been made clear that the criteria for determining the *method* of elementary education are to be derived from the psychology of the growing child, while the criteria for selecting the *content* of elementary education are the permanent factors in that social-individual interaction which we call life. Elementary education, then, is in undisputed possession of the principles and standards in the use of which a progressive and scientific solution of its problems may be reached. The secondary school begins where the elementary school leaves off. It adapts its work to the prepara-

tion it finds without ever presuming to raise the question of its right to prescribe or dictate what that preparation shall be.

The college, too, has undergone a great transformation especially within the last quarter of a century. In comparison with the elementary school, however, no such clear formulation of principles or setting of standards has characterized the change. The movement has been rather in the direction of an unorganized and piecemeal enlargement of the curriculum with a consequent loss of definiteness of aim and method. There has been, to be sure, a tentative formulation of an optimistic belief that somehow enlarged freedom is an adequate substitute for the resulting loss in definiteness. But even now this confidence begins to wane. It is idle to quarrel with the college because it would have its freedom to work out its problem, as the elementary school demanded and got its freedom, and as the secondary school longs for but does not get its freedom. This was a necessary stage in the march of progress. But the striking anomaly in the situation lies right here. The college got its freedom at the expense of the secondary school. The curriculum of the secondary school and college together constituted an intelligible whole that had at least a historical meaning and justification. Either part separated from the other lost its own significance, and yet to this day, the college, having secured for itself freedom, insists on holding within its grasp the control of the secondary school to which it arbitrarily handed over its own unsolved problem, insists, indeed, that there was after all no problem at all, that there has never been any real question to be decided.

This then is the plight of the secondary school. Beneath it the elementary school is working out a content and a method that will furnish a rational starting-point for the work of the secondary school. Above it is a college that does not now know just what it should be about but is quite sure that it knows what the secondary school should do. And the secondary school ground between the upper and nether millstone can neither adopt the sound philosophy of the elementary school and build consistently on its well-constructed foundation, nor work with enthusiasm at the problem handed over to it as insoluble by the college. There must be a way out.

W. B. O.